

THE SOUNDPOST

Newsletter of the Pacific Northwest Viols – A chapter of the Viola da Gamba Society of America
On the web: WWW.PNVIOLS.ORG

The President's Message

Lee Inman

I find it difficult to believe that another summer - full of workshops and festivals is drawing to a close. But it is, and with a drenching downpour and a bit of a chill, as well. I know that those of us with drought-parched gardens are, perhaps unsuccessfully, resisting an intense urge to get outside to do some post-season cleanup. Or am I merely projecting?

Wet or dry, the new Play Day year for Pacific Northwest Viols is soon to begin. 2015-16 brings with it some significant changes. I hope you will all find them to be appealing ones, even though change, for some, can be difficult, regardless of how necessary it is.

To recap a bit of recent history: Jim Savage retired last December from his long tenure as Music Director at Saint James Cathedral. It was under his auspices, and with his enthusiastic support, that our chapter had enjoyed resident-artist status at the cathedral. When the new Music Director took office early in August, he quickly embarked on a study of the facilities at Saint James, with the intent to balance demand on those facilities with their constraints and priorities. Unfortunately, when his study completed, it was determined that Pacific Northwest Viols no longer had a priority high enough for him to recommend our continued residency there.

Your chapter board then embarked on a search for another suitable Play Day venue. We rather quickly found one that not only can accommodate our requirements, but that also is very pleased to have us in residence: Queen Anne Christian Church. Many of you will already have enjoyed many early-music concerts there, along with a number of viol workshops organized by our beloved Margriet Tindemans. They have agreed to give us access to the entire church for our Play Days, and to store our chapter library there. Play Day dates were relatively easy to arrange on their calendar, too.

As I noted in my email to all members a few weeks ago, the only 'rent' Queen Anne Christian is asking in return is payment in-kind: that PNV members occasionally perform during church services. I met with Pastor Laurie Rudel a few days ago, and we selected a few tentative dates for those performances.

You'll note that those dates often coincide with the Sundays immediately following our Play Day meeting. Here they are:

Play Day Schedule

- 9:30 am - Check in, sign up for consorts, tune
- 10:00 am - Grand Consort Presentation
- 11:30 am - Annual Meeting
- 12:00 pm - Lunch Break
- 1:00 pm - First Consort Session
- 2:30 pm - Second Consort Session
- 4:00 pm - Clean up

\$20 Fee per participant
A = 415

October 3rd Play Day Location Queen Anne Christian Church

1316 3rd Ave. W
Seattle, Washington

- November 22, 2015
- January 24, 2016
- March 6, 2016
- May 15, 2016
- June, 2016 (date TBD)

I hope many of you will volunteer to fulfill this obligation. Board members Janet Slack and Chris Briden will be coordinating these performances with the church, so do reach out to them if you or your ensemble have a preferred date. Do bear in mind that Queen Anne Christian is open to adjusting the above dates if there are unavoidable conflicts, either with the church or with our performers.

But now to the first Play Day of the season on October 3rd. We're happy to welcome Nancy Zylstra that day. Her last session with us gave many of us new insights on how to 'sing' on the viol, as well as how to work with singers.

I believe we'll be most comfortable for the morning session in the Fellowship Hall, entered conveniently through the side door of the church, adjacent to the stained-glass window. There is plenty of space and light, and the library is mere steps away. We'll figure out rooms for the afternoon small-group sessions as the need arises that day.

I hope to see all of you on October 3rd, at lovely Queen Anne Christian Church.

--Lee

Nancy Zylstra Leads 2015-2016 Opening Play Day on October 3rd!

Image from www.bach-cantatas.com; Text from Cornish.edu.



We are again lucky to have Nancy Zylstra come and present to us at our season's inaugural Play Day on Saturday, October 3rd.

Called "one of the Northwest's great natural resources," by the Willamette Week, soprano Nancy Zylstra has earned critical acclaim for her pure and expressive singing in a wide variety of repertoire. She has sung with the leading period instrument orchestras and ensembles of North America and with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra under the direction of conductors Ton Koopman, Andrew Parrott, Gustav Leonhardt, and Jeffrey Thomas. She has also appeared at major festivals including Versailles, Berlin, Anchorage, Vancouver, San Luis Obispo, and Berkeley. A founding member of both Seattle Pro Musica and Choral Arts, she has been a soloist at St. James Cathedral, with the Northwest

Chamber Orchestra, Gallery Concerts, and numerous other ensembles throughout the Pacific Northwest.

As a teacher and clinician, Zylstra has been in great demand. She has been on the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory's Baroque Performance Institute since 1979 and is currently a

faculty member of the Seattle Academy of Opera. She has given masterclasses at Swarthmore College, University of Toronto, Willamette University, Reed College, for the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and The Voice Foundation, among many others. She is a member of The Voice Foundation, Northwest Voice Foundation, NATS, and Early Music America; she also served on the board of Early Music America for many years, and is currently on the advisory board for the Seattle Girls' Choir. Zylstra can be heard on the Erato, Wildboar, and Koch labels.

Recap of May 9th Play Day with Joanna Blendulf

Ellen Seibert; Image of Joanna, sfems.wordpress.com

Joanna Blendulf was our presenter at the Play Day on May 9th, 2015, our last meeting of the season. We met once again in the St. James Cathedral Education Building and gathered in large consort for the morning activity. Joanna came with a presentation titled ***Solving the Mysteries of the Elusive Galliard***. Joanna has a way of taking apart and detecting the smallest of items necessary to play music with great character and interest. As a master teacher, she can take a subject like the galliard, spend a whole morning on it, and give us new sets of bowings, dynamics, and rhythms to ferret out the most musical way to play it. Because not everyone could attend the session I am copying Joanna's instruction list with a few additional comments of my own in parentheses for she tells us all that we need to do.



1. What bow direction do I start with?

You should begin with a bow direction that gets you to your first "landing note" with a push bow. Quite often the "landing note" is a longer valued note, but when this is not the case you can bow it out until the end of a section. (Don't emphasize pressing the hair.)

2. What kind of bow strokes do I use?

Light strokes work best in this dance form since the directions for the actual dance include words like "lift," "leap" and "jump". This means that the bow should not ever be pressed and held into the string, even on the stronger beats, to keep the sound clear and effervescent. Practice short notes and longer bell tones to keep the variety of strokes at a maximum.

3. Before you dive right in, look at your part carefully.

If you have access to a score, even better! The dance will rarely stay in one meter and will likely shift between 2 and 3, sometimes for a single measure, so be on the lookout! Sometimes all the parts favor one, so this should be discussed in the consort before you begin.

4. How do I go about counting with the meter changes or others' parts are simultaneously in 2 and 3?

The easiest and most reliable way to count is to hear the RESULTANT RHYTHMS that occur when you have a cross-rhythm such as 2 against 3. Three half notes played at the same time as two dotted half notes will create the following RESULTANT RHYTHM: half-quarter-quarter-half. Practice this by yourself, beating 3 with one hand and 2 with the other! You will need to constantly be listening for these resultant rhythms and any other internal beats that are occurring. This is a challenge and becomes easier the more familiar you are with the galliard you are working on.

5. How do I make accents within the phrases and at the ends of sections?

When you have made light steps and are ready for a “long leap”, due to either your part or all the parts coming together on such a note, make sure to keep the bow moving! Try not to “dig your heels in” or make the tone sound “rustic”. Keep the sound elegant and use contrast in stroke, as discussed earlier, instead of using heavy accents. Landings should be soft and not hard! Dance with your bow!

(DON'T PRESS, and LIFT, LEAP and JUMP)

With these tenets in mind playing galliards should be a lot easier and more elegant, as Joanna says!

The group then went on to play three Holborne galliards, all in 5 parts:

Ecce quam bonum
Wanton
The Fairie-round

The morning session passed by all too quickly and regrettably Joanna could not stay for the afternoon sessions as she was performing in the University of Washington's production of *The Magic Flute* that evening. We were very fortunate to have her with us, filling in for Margriet, thus continuing our excellent string of expert teachers.

Notes from VdGSA Conclave 2015: Tuning a Consort

Charlie Nagel

There are many “take home” gems from every VdGSA conclave. From this year's conclave there were some memorable one-liners, like Emily Walhout's suggestion to visualize “sinking the bow into the string” as moving it toward the floor rather than toward your body, and her description of a smooth bow as a “peanut butter bow”. But one extremely useful idea I brought home with me is a bit more complex: Janet Haas's method of tuning a consort to itself.

Janet's insight is that individuals each tuning to his or her electronic device results in separate instruments that might be “in tune,” but that doesn't necessarily result in the consort itself having a good resonance. Here is the method she used to tune the groups of viols in her classes, and the result is indeed a remarkably coherent and rich ensemble sound.

1. Begin with tuning one bass viol's open upper **A** to an electronic device. Once one bass player has a good **A** then all bass players tune **A**, both upper and, if there are 7-string basses, the lower **A**. Then tenors tune their **A** followed by the trebles tuning their **A**.
2. Trebles and tenors sustain **A** while basses tune both **Ds**. Then tenors tune their **D** follow by trebles tuning their **D**.
3. Trebles and tenors sustain their **D** and basses tune **G**. Then tenors tune both **Gs** to the bass **G** followed by the trebles tuning their **G**.
4. Tenors sustain upper **G** and basses tune **C**. Trebles tune their **C**, then tenors tune to the treble **C**.
5. Trebles sustain **C** and tenors tune **F**.
6. Tenors sustain **A** and trebles tune **E**.
7. Trebles sustain **E** and basses tune **E**.

When to use the visual gauge on an electronic tuner:

- When you are alone
- To test your aural intervallic tuning skills
- To set your frets
- To set the standard for tuning the consort

Report from the Port Townsend Early Music Workshop, July 11th-15th, 2015

Molly Warner, from the Seattle Recorder Society's "Recorder Notes", September 2015, photos by Vicki Boeckman

The sixteenth Port Townsend Early Music Workshop was a great success! This every-other-year event for amateur musicians, begun by the Seattle Recorder Society in 1983 in Port Townsend, has been held since 2009 on the lovely campus of the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. For the last three seasons, the workshop has been carefully planned and carried out by the highly competent team of Vicki Boeckman (Music Director) and Jo Baim (Administrative Director). This year there were 68 attendees from eleven states and two Canadian provinces. We had fourteen wonderful faculty members who coached recorders, early winds, viols, voices, or percussion.

Our week zipped by with the following schedule: four classes a day with Wednesday afternoon off, and evening programs that included an orientation and coached playing session with Vicki Boeckman, a drum circle with Peter Maund, a faculty jam session with dessert, a faculty concert, and a parade to the salmon dinner with entertainment (costumes were optional). The week concluded with the student concert on Saturday morning. Whew! Luckily there was some free time (between scheduled activities, meals, and collapsing into bed at night) for spontaneous playing.

Soundpost Editor's Note – Another summary from our own Ellen Seibert:

The Seattle Recorder Society continues to sponsor this workshop, a gathering of recorders, viols, buzzies, percussion, and voices. On the SRS website (<http://www.seattle-recorder.org>)

you can read the latest newsletter, *Recorder Notes*, with full comments from participants who came to share in music making. I urge you to read through this newsletter. It's a terrific publication with ample photos and descriptions of all that went on. With luminaries like Vicki Boeckman, Clea Galhano, Nina Stern, Louise Carslake and Adam Gilbert as recorder and winds faculty, Phil and Gayle Neuman with all their percussion, strings, and reeded instruments, Peter Maund with his percussion wizardry, and Brent Wissick, David Morris, and Mary Springfels as viol faculty, and finally Peter Seibert with Voices and Viols it was a marvelous week!

Soundpost Editor's Note: Here are some class write-ups from PTEMW participants that I felt our readers would be particularly interested in!

Brent Wissick: Go Loopy for Lupo

by Janet Loy, Portland, Oregon



Early on, we learned that Thomas Lupo did not operate in a vacuum. His very musical family, by way of Italy and the Netherlands as well as other points of interest, brought to the English courts a variety of musical colors. While we explored several fantasias, Brent helped us appreciate the very vocal and madrigal-like moments in Lupo's work. To help us focus on this we also played music by other composers such as Cipriano and Arcadelt. Brent skillfully reminded us of other important folks like Coprario, Gibbons, and Ferrabosco who worked in the courts of Elizabeth and James who would possibly have influenced Lupo's work. The six of us in the class thoroughly enjoyed two 3-part pieces by Lupo. One of them was a Fantasia (VdGS 14) which practically sang itself (on the

viol) as Brent helped us with the beautifully crafted polyphonic lines. The other was a Pavan (VdGS 1) with equally engaging lines. Brent's techniques of getting us to count in different modes, make dynamic changes that would fit the words if there were some, and shape phrases to define the musical ideas were extremely helpful. All in all, "Loopy Lupo" was a very gratifying class.

Peter Seibert: Voices and Viols

by Bill Warren, Seattle, WA

I am always impressed at Peter's ability to pull together a disparate collection of recorders, viols, and voices over the course of a week to performance level for the student concert on Saturday. He manages to get across the essential techniques of playing and singing so that we integrate into an orchestra. He does this with wit and charm so that the entire process is fun and instructive. We worked on a total of seven pieces over the course of the week and then performed three of the best for the student concert. Thank you, Peter, for another inspiring "Voices and Viols" class at Port Townsend 2015. I am already looking forward to "Voices and Viols" 2017!



Peter Seibert: Voices and Viols

by Molly Warner, Seattle, WA

Peter brought to our rehearsals a careful knowledge of each of the seven pieces, both with regard to the big picture—such as the place in history of the composer, his livelihood, patron, and politics—and to the little details of how to bring life to each piece. He encouraged us with words such as, “Swell the voices here, all breathe together there (viols as well as recorders and singers), end those words with distinct consonants, and make those musical phrases express the intent and passion of the words (in English or in Latin).” Singers stood behind their instrumental counterparts so that Peter knew just where to cue each section.

We began on Monday with four pieces by sixteenth century English composers (William Byrd, Thomas Tallis, and others) and added more as the week progressed. Peter had timed how many minutes we would work on each piece each day. By Friday the pieces on which we had worked the hardest had really jelled. What fun to work under the direction of such an experienced choral and orchestral conductor! Thanks once again, Peter. I, too, will sign up for this class next time!

Mary Springfels: Technique and Please Send Regretz!

by Ellen Seibert, Seattle, WA

What a lucky person I was to have Mary Springfels, extraordinary performer on the viola da gamba, for an afternoon class and two sessions of morning technique. Mary is a walking encyclopedia of musical knowledge and an incredible analyst and teacher of instructions for playing the gamba from as far back as the 16th century. The morning class was filled with a facsimile version of scales and fingerings from Christopher Simpson’s great tutorial about divisions published in 1665. In addition, Mary thoughtfully created a modern translation for us with more familiar clefs. Her points about learning the fingerings for scales in such a way as to be able to transpose anywhere on the keyboard were invaluable: “Your keyboard, it’s about the GRID!”



Our afternoon class was called Please Send Regretz! This was mostly somber texts by composers like Brumel, Pierre de la Rue, and Agricola, all from a book compiling music collected by and in the time of Marguerite of Austria. We loved those open fifths and clashing seconds. All in all, a viol player could not have had any better technique and musical guidance on the gamba than sitting alongside Mary Springfels, one of our master teachers (whose numbers just declined with the loss of Margriet). We hope to have Mary back again and again.

Report from Viols West, August 9th to 15th, 2015, San Luis Obispo, CA

Ellen Seibert

Going to viol intensive workshops gives one perspective about life. First, there is the excitement of getting ready to play music with friends old and new, meeting faculty professionals who will be instructors, and having a change of scene while traveling to another place. The weeklong workshop creates massive possibilities. Maybe I will play better than I did before, especially if I practice diligently both beforehand and during the week. Maybe I will actually learn some things I should have known long ago but now finally can approach and do them. Maybe when I get home again all this new knowledge will fall into place and I will be a changed person in my music world!

So, all of the above went through my mind and all of it actually happened, except maybe for the getting home part when I am a changed person. After the farewells and AMTRAK boarding to head back to Seattle, after the delays from the train-truck incident near Salinas, the lengthy stopping and starting again while the front engine was switched with the second one so the headlights would work, the track fires in the wee hours of the night when we stopped in the high mountains, the five-hour lateness into King Street Station and the cab ride home at two-thirty in the morning, life returned to its normal pattern. The mail to open, the bills to catch up with, the groceries, the garden watering, the appointments several of us need to attend to, the out of town arrivals of relatives and guests from afar, the music stand opened in the corner with the pages of notes waiting to be practiced.... all this happened too.

Was it worth it? A resounding YES!

Did I mention that Viols West is now located on the Cal Poly campus in Poly Canyon, a new complex of buildings with a plaza where we dined at tables under umbrella shading, enjoying excellent catered meals? The dorm suites and elevators made for easy living for 70 of us and the nighttime falling temperatures provided cool sleeping. A bonus was the outdoor salt-water swimming pool set next to the mountainous hillsides in the background, a welcome refresher between classes and that provided late night swimming under the stars. All this, and there was nobody else on campus using these facilities.

But enough of these resort like accommodations, the musical delights were the real show. Personally I had taken a treble and a 7-string bass viol with me, having signed up for John Dornenberg's Marais Trios class using the *Deuxième Suite* in Book 4. There were ten of us plus Nina Bailey, harpsichordist from Berkeley, and I was completely scared to death to execute those ultra-high notes above the frets and the rapid arpeggios in various movements, all while wrestling with my bass which kept wanting to slide down to the floor. I was not used to it since I was using my 6-string bass all the time until it got smashed just before the Port Townsend workshop in July. Lo and behold, however, things began to fall into place and I at least kept up with the class, in which everyone played everything, or switched parts so that all of us got John's instructions about what Marais wanted. John loves to do this Marais class since the composer himself tells us in minute detail how to finger the notes, what ornaments to use and when to

place them, making it easy to know how to play this gorgeous 18th century music. The facsimile manuscripts from Marais' own hand is beautiful to look at and read. A few individuals played some movements for the class at the end of the week and one trio performed at the Saturday morning concert. I was very impressed.

David Morris led the 6-part consort class I had in the morning, which included our own Lee Talner. I was on treble and David presented us with different composers each day, such as Jenkins, Lawes, and Coleman. David has a fantastic coaching style. He listens intently and then asks us to figure out what is still needed or what is too much or too little. He knew he had a good group of readers, musical as well, and we were attentive to suggestions quickly. This was my "technique" class and turned out to be the highlight of my week in terms of such satisfying consort playing of a very high caliber. David brought out the best in each of us.

My afternoon Lawes and Coleman class with Joanna Blendulf was also a delight, as any class that Joanna teaches is an incredible learning opportunity. Four of the six players were from the northwest: Janet Loy, Zoe Tokar, Janet Slack and me.

Ros Morley directs this workshop with great skill and thought and Melita Denny does superb administrative duties to get this ready each year and to handle the myriad necessities that come up during the workshop. Beyond putting all of us into good classes for us they organized evening faculty playing with participants, a new-music night in which many of us took part, group playing on the first night, and the famous faculty concert with no rehearsal. All faculty play together, more or less sight-reading pieces that each one has brought. It's fun, wonderful to hear, and there is no time taken from students during the week while faculty has to go off and rehearse for a concert. Satisfying to Peter Seibert, who came with me, the faculty played his new Waltz, part of a set of dances soon to be published.

The Thursday afternoon and evening off was a chance to go to the beach or mountains or into San Luis Obispo for the farmers' markets and eat a meal or just swim and take a nap. Of course there was bountiful evening consort playing and catching up with friends and meeting new ones, like the six Australians who attended.

I can recommend this workshop to all viol players as a chance to share with others what I think of as the highest order of human activity, artistic expression. The atmosphere is friendly, all levels of viol playing are included, and the location is perfect.

Soundpost Editor's Note: I am sure a few readers were as shocked as I was to read about Ellen's viol mishap prior to PTEMW. Thankfully, her 6-string bass has been repaired (thank you, Scott A. Smith!) and will be joining us for Play Days soon!

Pacific Northwest Viols Membership & Renewal Reminder

Olga "What the Dickens?" Hauptman, PNV Poet Laureate and Membership Custodian

I'm a member! Who are you?
Are you a member too?
Then there's a pair of us (well actually about seven pairs of us)
Do tell!

How dreary to have lapsed members!
Are we going to the dogs?
Please pay your dues today, and
I'll admire you more than frogs.



For Sale: Renaissance Viol owned by Margriet Tindemans

An amazing Renaissance Bass Viol by Ray Nurse. Made in 1988, it has a string length of 68cm and a 68cm body length. This instrument is inspired by a renaissance Venetian sketch. The viol does not have a bow but does come with a very nice, fitted Kingham case.

The asking price is \$8,000 or best offer.

Please write or call Chris Briden at chrisbriden@gmail.com, (206) 261-6248, for more information.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Pacific Northwest Viols - 2015-2016 Season

PNV Play Day Dates

- ❖ **October 3, 2015: Nancy Zylstra**
- ❖ November 21, 2015: Lee Inman
- ❖ January 23, 2016: TBD
- ❖ March 5, 2016: TBD
- ❖ May 14, 2016: TBD

*\$20 Fee per participant
A = 415*

Play Day location is at our NEW venue:

***Queen Anne Christian Church
1316 3rd Ave. W
Seattle, Washington***

Pacific Northwest Viols, Board Members (2015-2016)

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| ❖ Lee Inman, President | ❖ Chris Briden, Outreach |
| ❖ Jon Brenner, Secretary, Programs | ❖ Michael King, Communications & Member At Large |
| ❖ Bill Warren, St. James Coordinator | ❖ Vicki Hoffman, Programs |
| ❖ Michael LaGaly, Treasurer | ❖ Olga Hauptman, Instrument Rental & Membership Roster Custodian |
| ❖ Janet Slack, Member at Large | |

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The Soundpost welcomes reader contributions of any kind: articles, commentary, personal stories, event reportage. E-Mail is preferred, but postal mail or napkin scribbles are all gladly received, as well.

Email: miking@microsoft.com